

**Testimony**  
**Before the Public Health Committee**  
March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
**In SUPPORT of**

**H. B. 5740 AN ACT CONCERNING UNIFORM STANDARDS AND THE PROVISION OF MENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES AT SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS**

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished Committee Members:

I'm Diane Frost and am pleased to let you in on one of the best days of my life. Nearly every day is a best day, now that I'm in recovery from bipolar disorder. Juxtapose this next to the little girl I used to be: attending to my classroom lessons craving education that might have pushed disruptive thoughts out of my head that I could not explain. I sat on the playground stoop alone, because I was unpredictable and moody.

Now I'm 37. But between the ages of 4 years to 19 years-of-age I most wanted to be here telling you to help people like me. Thankfully, those terrifying days are past because of the astuteness of a teacher in whose classroom I learned a great lesson of a young person's life: I needed access to mental health care services in school, the place I knew best.

Providing mental health services on school grounds ensures that children will gain the services they need while they learn how gifted they are as human beings. In their socially formative years, they need self-esteem and the stability that mental illness severely hinders. Though my need for help long preceded my receiving it, part of that might be because I didn't have access to school-based resources that I needed.

I was advocated for by a wise teacher who knew I was in crisis soon after I entered the classroom and referred me, through my parents, to my first psychiatrist in private practice. There are perks to being raised in an affluent lifestyle, as I was. Realistically, most kids are not as privileged as I was. We all deserve to grow up healthy, instead of being shredded down by mental illness.

In case you're curious about the reasons I'm vibrant and functioning today, it is because as a peer support specialist and case manager at Bridges... A Community Support System, Inc. in Milford, I can offer the support and linkage to services that I was nearly denied. I succeeded through my resilience and my teacher's keen eye. As a youngster, I believed I was valuable, and if I made it past my illness, I could speak for so many kids who deserve to learn they are worthy as they are educated to be productive and active.

Please support Proposed H.B. 5740 AN ACT CONCERNING UNIFORM STANDARDS AND THE PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS for all the 100,000 childhoods in Connecticut you could save and the healthy, happy and contributing adults they can become. According to a Surgeon General report about 20% of children have diagnosable treatable emotional-behavioral disorderly in CT. I think those children would benefit from school-based mental health services as well.

*(Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health, 1999.)*

Having uniform high standards for all school-based health centers and their mental health services would ensure that all students have access to high-quality care and can receive relevant services if they need them.

Thank you for your time and for considering my testimony.

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